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KT photo | **Tim Bath**
Rob Burgess, Tribune night editor

House of Burgess: The Best of 2014 Awards

Also, thank you for reading this year

By Rob Burgess
Tribune columnist

Welcome to this, the third annual Best of the Year Awards. If you read something I wrote this year, including this: thank you. On June 27, I joined the Tribune's editorial board. Earlier this month, I was honored for the second year in a row at the Hoosier State Press Association Foundation Better Newspaper Contest, as I won second place for Best General Commentary. Also this year, I became a father July 12 when my son, Harper Theodore Cash Burgess, was born. I'm looking forward to 2015. This was the best of 2014:

Best rap album

“Run the Jewels 2” by Run the Jewels: I’ve followed Killer Mike (Michael Render) since he debuted on “Snappin’ and Trappin’” — Track 6 of OutKast’s 2000 classic “Stankonia.” And I was first introduced to El-P (Jaime Meline) on 2007’s “I’ll Sleep When You’re Dead.” Mike calls them the “new Jules and Vincent” from “Pulp Fiction,” and like Quentin Tarantino’s films, they too provide triumphant returns for older artists like Zack de la Rocha (at his best since Rage Against the Machine) and Gangsta Boo (a fellow “Stankonia” veteran.) El Producto’s beats and rhymes have never been better. The Elegant Elephant has outdone himself lyrically. This is two talented friends having fun at what is far from their first rodeo.

Best comics website

The Nib: Edited by one of the best political cartoonists, Matt Bors, The Nib has been my go-to for sharp, funny comics journalism. Featuring Bors, Ruben Bolling, Keith Knight, Brian McFadden, Ted Rall and Tom Tomorrow, Medium’s home for political cartoons was indispensable this year.

Best new podcast

“Serial”: This spinoff of “This American Life” spent this season chronicling reporter Sarah Koenig’s year-long investigation into the 1999 Baltimore murder of 18-year-old Hae Min Lee and the conviction of ex-boyfriend, Adnan Masud Sayed. Quality, old-fashioned, first-person radio journalism

was the most revolutionary — and popular — idea the podcast format has ever seen. As of Sunday, all 10 of the top podcast episodes on the iTunes charts are “Serial”. They have elevated the entire medium. (Also, I’m glad this season didn’t end definitively. Real life is often messy like that.)

Best posthumously released roman à clef

“The Last Magazine: A Novel,” by Michael Hastings: I was probably more excited to read Michael Hastings’ posthumously published “The Last Magazine” than any other novel this year. In 2014 I also read his three nonfiction books: “I Lost My Love in Baghdad” (2008); “The Operators” (2012); and “Panic 2012” (2013). I also did a deep dive on his stories for Rolling Stone, BuzzFeed and GQ, among others. Much of the fun of “The Last Magazine,” a thinly veiled roman à clef of his days at Newsweek, was matching fiction and reality. (As compiled by Gawker’s J.K. Trotter: Michael M. Hastings = Michael M. Hastings, A.E. Peoria = Adam Piore, Nishant Patel = Fareed Zakaria, Sanders Berman = Jon Meachum, Mark Healy = Michael Isikoff, etc.) Hastings may have died in a deeply suspicious June 2013 one-car crash in Los Angeles, but his superb journalism, and now his fiction, lives on.

Best TV show I finished this year

“Gilmore Girls”: (Warning: spoilers.) I still believe the show’s theme song, a re-recording of Carole King’s “Where You Lead,” was custom-designed to

drive any males out of the room before the show begins. But having seen all 153 episodes of “Gilmore Girls” with my wife, Ash, I will now defend this show to my last. Name me another show this popular and this subversive. It managed to slip in references to the likes of Akira Kurosawa, Jack Kevorkian, H.L. Mencken and Ted Kaczynski for seven seasons, in primetime; and (first) on The WB and (later) The CW, no less. It was a literate, light, effervescent comedy/drama with excellent writing and acting. It even went out on top: Luke and Lorelai most certainly tie the knot. I always hated Logan. (I could have stood for a last-minute return of Jess, but at least she didn’t marry Dean!) We leave Rory as she is on track to become our generation’s Christiane Amanpour. A-OK with me.

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